

Peer-review report of

Bokern, Y.N.A., van der Toorn, J., & Ellemers, N. (2026). Voices behind walking the talk: Quantified qualitative insights on D&I policy support reasoning. *advances.in/psychology*, 1, e536151. <https://doi.org/10.56296/aip00050>

Round 1

Editor Decision

Dear Authors,

Thank you for submitting your manuscript, “Voices Behind Walking the Talk: Qualitative Insights on Rationales for D&I Policy Support,” to our special issue on the Psychology of Pushback. We were fortunate to receive reviews from two experts in the field with strong expertise in this area, and we are grateful for their constructive feedback. In addition, we carefully evaluated your work ourselves prior to reading the reviews.

All of us recognize clear strengths in your submission. As Reviewer 1 notes, “The manuscript is well written, uses a great data set, and offers a very nuanced and thoughtful perspective on DEI sentiments within organizations.” Reviewer 2 likewise emphasizes the “innovative mixed-methods approach,” your effort to address “a clear weakness in literature on D&I,” and the strength of your sample. Both reviewers underscore the value and implications of your work. We, the Editors of this Special Issue, also recognized many of these strengths related to your multidimensional approach to support for or resistance to DEI.

At the same time, both reviewers identified limitations that warrant your attention, and their concerns overlap in notable ways. We, the Editors of this Special Issue, also had reservations about several aspects of the current version of the manuscript, including some core conceptual and analytical elements. While we wrestled a bit with our assessment of the balance between the manuscript’s strengths and weaknesses, we felt that there was sufficient novelty and promise to your work to consider a revised version of the work for publication. Please note that the requested revisions are substantial, and we cannot guarantee that they will result in acceptance of your manuscript. That said, we see considerable potential in this work and would not extend this invitation if we were not optimistic about your ability to meet these expectations.

As you will see from their comments, the Reviewers devoted considerable time and effort to reviewing your work and offering constructive recommendations. While we ask that you respond to each of the Reviewer’s points in your revision, we will not restate them here, as the reviewers have articulated them clearly. Instead, we wish to highlight a few aspects that we consider especially important.

Like the Reviewers, we had concerns about the conceptual framing of the manuscript. Parts of the Introduction presently focuses on the attitude-behavior distinction. While we agree that is an important issue, we note that the consideration

of this topic needs to be stronger both conceptually and empirically. Both reviewers also converge on the need for a more thorough elaboration of divergences between behavior and attitudes, a topic extensively studied in psychology. Please provide a review of this broader literature, including work in related intergroup domains.

While we do not ask you to abandon your consideration of the attitude-behavior relationship, we do request that you develop the section on “Rethinking Support and Resistance: Uncovering the Underlying Motives Behind Support Profiles” in a way that foreshadows some of the kinds of profiles that might emerge from your analyses, and how these could relate to the issue of attitude-behavior consistency.

Relatedly, both reviewers raised concerns about the measures used to classify participants into clusters. Given the limited information currently provided about the items, it is difficult to determine what the two scales actually capture. In particular, the example item on attitudinal D&I support raises significant questions. As written, it appears to measure perceptions of the efficacy of organizational D&I policies rather than participants’ own support for them. This creates important interpretive challenges. As one reviewer noted, “bystanders” may refrain from behavioral engagement because they view the existing system as effective, rather than because they lack willingness to engage. The same issue applies to “reluctants,” who may engage behaviorally precisely because they perceive the system as ineffective. Addressing this concern will require greater transparency about the measure (please present all items in the main text) and may also necessitate rethinking and reconceptualizing the clusters.

Similarly, we noted that the measure of behavior was self-reports about general orientations (e.g., “I contribute to the successful implementation of the diversity policy of my organization.”) rather than specific documented actions. This raised further questions about how effectively the current operationalizations of attitudes and behavior are distinguished. It is important that you provide more direct evidence of this distinction. Both reviewers ask you to demonstrate, through factor analysis, that the two constructs are distinct. Please also report the correlation between these measures.

Reviewer 1 further requests that you consider participants’ minority–majority backgrounds. Such an analysis could be presented in a manner similar to the comparison between managers and non-managers.

In addition to these points, we identified several issues that also require attention. Please be sure to address the following in your revision:

TITLE

To avoid that readers assume the current study is purely qualitative, we suggest changing the wording to “Quantified Qualitative Insights.”

INTRODUCTION

You state that the five-cluster solution is based on previous work. Please clarify whether that earlier work relied on the same data. If so, statements such as

“Standardized residuals revealed that managers were significantly overrepresented among Champions and Reluctants, and underrepresented among Ambivalents and Opponents, aligning with previous research (Bokern et al., under review)” or that your data “replicated” this work are problematic, as the results would necessarily be the same. In the introduction, please clarify how the present manuscript extends the work currently under review and how it makes a sufficiently distinct contribution to warrant a separate paper.

You should describe the context of your investigation in greater political and historical detail, particularly with regard to D&I. This applies both to the national setting and to the type of organization you studied.

The Integrated Model of Organizational Change (IMOC) is presented as your guiding framework, but its adequacy for this study is not yet clear and requires greater elaboration and alignment with your methods. In particular, it remains unclear how mastery, meaning, and belongingness were assessed and incorporated into the analyses. For example, how was belongingness measured? At one point, you write: “Bystanders expressed high attitudinal support but remained behaviorally passive, indicating misalignment. They frequently voiced symbolic or affective support, describing D&I as an important moral value, yet showed limited engagement with policy content or implementation. This pattern likely reflects high meaning but limited mastery and belongingness.” It is not evident, however, how these findings demonstrate limited mastery or belongingness. Disengagement does not necessarily imply lack of mastery, and it is unclear why it would indicate the absence of belonging. Please clarify in the introduction why the model was chosen, how it was applied and operationalized, and in the discussion specify more explicitly which data patterns support the presence (or absence) of each factor.

METHODS

We were unable to access the supplementary materials through the OSF link provided. Please supply an anonymized link that ensures open access for all readers.

Interrater reliability is essential information and should be reported in the main text.

Please provide a detailed description of how the data were coded and indicate whether reliability was adequate.

Thorough reporting of model fit indices is equally important. Please provide these indices for all models compared in both the K-clustering and the LCA analyses.

It is unclear why you chose to use K-means clustering followed by LCA. Please elaborate on the rationale for this combination rather than using LPA and LCA. An

advantage of LPA, for instance, is that it allows analyses to be weighted by classification uncertainty. Related to the previous point, if you retain K-means clustering, you should report within-cluster sum of squares (inertia) as the core metric for comparing solutions, along with additional criteria such as the elbow method or silhouette score to justify your decision.

Please provide an explanation in the main text for why the data are available only upon reasonable request.

RESULTS

As one reviewer noted, Figure 1 contains a mislabeling that made the results difficult to interpret. Please correct it and clarify whether this error affected any other results.

“Figure 1 visualizes subthemes that meaningfully differentiated the classes, defined as subthemes with at least 15% prevalence in one class and less than 5% in another.” Please provide references supporting this choice as it otherwise may appear arbitrary.

Please provide a graphical representation with 95% CIs of the five clusters, showing mean scores on the clustering variables and testing for statistical differences between them. Likewise, Figure 2 needs 95% CIs.

You need to present test estimates that allow us to judge the statistical significance of differences. It is not sufficient to only present adjusted residuals.

You write, “Additionally, we examined open-ended responses within each D&I policy support cluster to explore how managers and non-managers described their reasoning (see Supplement D).” Please present this result in the main text if possible.

In the limitations you discuss non-response rates in the different clusters. In the results, please provide a test of which groups differed significantly in this regard.

DISCUSSION

More engagement with existing work would be valuable. For instance, please provide references for this statement in the discussion, “These conditions are likely to foster behavioral commitment forms such as cooperation (acceptance) or championing (enthusiastic support), which in the SHRM model potentially strengthen the link between intended policies and their enactment and perception.”

In the discussion, you frequently state that certain profiles perceived D&I as having “moral value.” However, it is not clear how moral value was assessed or which specific results demonstrated this. Please clarify.

STYLISTIC ISSUES

APA style: In references with two authors in parentheses, use "&" rather than "and."

Do not italicize Greek letters.

In Table 2, replace the comma with a dot, and ensure the labels for the reasoning patterns are consistent with those used previously. The current changes were confusing.

Table 2 should also include *p*-values in addition to adjusted residuals. The rows reporting cluster frequencies should be labeled "*n*."

Carefully check all statistical reporting for misplaced commas instead of dots, and ensure proper spacing around *p*-values. For example: " $\chi^2(4, 1,407) = 62.35, p < .001$." (There are many similar issues throughout.)

Because the manuscript contains only one discussion section, the heading should be "Discussion," not "General Discussion."

Please avoid single-sentence paragraphs. Each paragraph should contain at least two sentences.

Greater care is needed when referring to results in terms of "behavior." Please make explicit that what you measured is "self-reported behavior."

There are several issues with the references and citations, including missing entries and incorrect publication years. Please address all problems identified in the following citation report carefully:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nbwCGfGXyOcZXxNqusceYdDfeLwhcFNB/view?usp=sharing>

In sum, we see considerable potential in this work, but we do not believe that potential has been fully realized in its current form. We therefore invite you to submit a revised version by September 30. If you should require more time, do not hesitate to reach out to us. We understand that the requested changes may require additional space, and we are granting an extension of up to 2,000 words.

Best,

Jonas R. Kunst & John F. Dovidio

Reviewer 1

In this paper the authors present one mixed-methods study advancing the argument that support for D&I policies should be conceptualized along two dimensions: attitudinal support and behavioral support. They find some supportive evidence for this general hypothesis. Overall I thought these things were good:

- Highlights and attempts to address a clear weakness in literature on D&I
- Utilizes innovative mixed-methods approach
- Draws sample from a relevant population (employees engaging with an organizational policy)
- The topic is important for society, to increase our understanding of how to implement D&I policies

Although there were clear strengths of the manuscript, I also had several significant concerns about the theorizing and data analysis. I will elaborate on those concerns below in an effort to help the authors as they pursue these questions in the future.

- Broadly, I found the work to be under-theorized for a psychology journal. It's a longstanding fact that there are differences in attitudes and behavior, and a key contribution of psychological work is to understand why. So in this case, I wanted to see a stronger effort to explain what psychological factors contribute to the (mis-)alignment of attitudes and behaviors regarding organizational D&I initiatives. E.g. Are reluctants ideologically opposed by high in conformity? Are bystanders expressing what they perceive normative ideology but not really personally aligned? Delving into some of these questions about norms, motivations, and relevant ideologies will help contextualize what's important about the data.
- Additionally, I had questions about some of the choices regarding the data. As a caveat, the OSF link provided in the manuscript did not work, so some of these questions may be addressed there, but I can only evaluation based on what I had access to.
 - Though the paper focused on addressing attitudinal and behavioral divergences regarding D&I, I did not find the provided reflective self-report likert scale to be a particularly strong measure of behavior. Further, without more information, it was hard to tell how much it overlapped or differed from the attitudinal measure. At minimum, I'd want to see all of the items from both scales in the text, plus the correlation between the scales, and a factor analysis addressing whether they are best conceptualized as two distinct factors. I'd also want to know if D&I awareness was conceptualized a priori as a "control variable" or if this was post-hoc, and what that decision was based on. This relatively high transparency bar is because the central point of the paper is about distinguishing between attitudes and behaviors, so most of this would need to appear in the paper, not just on OSF.

- There were also some smaller concerns about how the data was presented. I believe figure 1 was mis-labelled, (e.g. the critiquing policy from an advocacy perspective column had the highest prevalence of the unawareness of D&I policy theme). However, I'm not sure this is the best figure to display this data –a table that just had the values and then used color or shading to highlight the most prevalent themes would be much easier to readers to parse. Additionally, I'd want to see quite a bit more explanation of how you arrived at the themes and what the major themes mean broadly for participants' psychology.

I think this work is important and interesting, and I hope my comments will assist the authors as they pursue this program of research going forward.

Reviewer 2

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript. I read the paper with much enthusiasm and found much to like about it. The manuscript is well written, uses a great data set, and offers a very nuanced and thoughtful perspective on DEI sentiments within organizations. I found the distinction between attitudes and behavior in this domain incredibly valuable, and the use of LCA to identify these distinct profiles makes a very useful contribution to this contentious area of study. While I am 'sold' on the value of the research, there are some areas for improvement as detailed below.

First, I was surprised not to see much in the introduction or discussion drawing on the large literature relating to attitude-behavior relationships, nor research on construal level or the principle-implementation gap. The choice to look at attitudes and behaviors separately is mentioned briefly in the introduction, but there isn't much else in the paper on when and why these can diverge. For example, the introduction could draw upon the literature on principle-implementation gap or the attitude-behavior link to articulate why it is so important to look at attitudes and behaviors simultaneously and perhaps provide some examples from the literature showing how these can diverge and limiting ourselves to only attitudes may distort our understanding. Similarly, the discussion mentions that *bystanders* reflect the difference between their support for the *why* but lack of support for *how* and yet this directly relates to the distinction between abstract and concrete construals in the literature.

Second, I was unable to access the OSF link that is inaccessible without a personalized request for access, but I wanted to see more about the attitudinal support items as the example included in the paper could be interpreted in more than one way. Specifically, the item included asks if current policy is effective, but perhaps one thinks current policy is ineffective, but strongly possess pro-DEI policy attitudes at a broader level. In fact, many DEI advocates I have met in academia and government are quite critical of almost any DEI policy in place as they are often championing something different from what is already in place, so I wondered what the entire measure looked like as this item may be slightly different from the rest.

More broadly, it will be good to see all the items for attitudes and behaviors alongside the other study materials.

Third, is it possible to use employees' own demographic background to code whether they are members of a marginalized group and conduct the same kind of test that was done to compare managers vs. non-managers? I realize this is probably a taller task, but to many readers, they will wonder if these classes within the organization reflect the majority or dominant group that are less impacted by DEI policies versus those that such policies are aimed to help. It may be that the profiles don't vary much based on this as people often simplistically assume that minority groups are pro-DEI and it is the majority that are driving any resistance, so such data would be very useful. At the very least, some reflection on this is warranted in the discussion.

And finally, on a more minor point, I would ask for the model fit indices to be moved up to the main manuscript and not buried in the supplementary section.

Overall, I think this is a really interesting piece of work that will make a useful contribution to the literature. With some more work, it will be an even stronger piece.

Round 2

Editor Decision

Dear Authors,

Thank you for submitting your revised manuscript, "Voices Behind Walking the Talk: Qualitative Insights on Rationales for D&I Policy Support," to our special issue on the Psychology of Pushback. We were fortunate to receive reviews from the same two experts who evaluated the original version, and we are grateful for their constructive feedback. In addition, we carefully evaluated your work ourselves prior to reading the reviews.

As do the Reviewers, we find your manuscript to be substantially improved. We appreciate your responsiveness to the guidance offered in the initial round of review. The introduction is more comprehensive and coherent, the rationale for the particular sample recruited for the research is more persuasive, the analyses are more detailed, and the discussion now makes a much stronger connection between the findings and the theoretical models you draw upon. However, as you will see, both reviewers still have some remaining concerns. We ask that you address each of them or present a justified rebuttal.

Most centrally:

- Reviewer 1 writes regarding the term "Reluctants", "Given that, it seems like the most reasonable interpretation of this profile is not that they are attitudinally opposed to D&I yet support it behaviorally, but rather that they are attitudinally and behaviorally supportive of D&I yet believe that the organization is not doing a sufficient amount of D&I work. This is a substantially different interpretation than what is advanced in the manuscript, but seems closer to the data." It would be beneficial if you added an

acknowledgment and discussion of this alternative explanation to the Discussion section.

- Regarding the minority vs. majority analyses: Thank you for adding these to the SOM. We agree with Reviewer 1 that these results are important enough to move into the main text. Please move Tables S3 and S4 to the manuscript, reporting exact p -values in it rather than using asterisks. You may then add a short section discussing these findings (similar to the Managerial Role section) to the Discussion. It is acceptable if this extends the word limit.

In addition, please address the following specific issues we noted:

- Reviewer 1 identified relevant work on the topic of “DEI being endorsed more at high levels of construals.” We ask that you consider this relevant literature in your revised manuscript.
- Reviewer 2 remarks that the “paper still engages very minimally with any intergroup or social identity work, and this remains a real point of concern.” We appreciate your understanding of the body of work that Reviewer 2 refers to, and we encourage you to draw on that research more explicitly where you feel it is appropriate.
- Reviewer 2 highlights the potential conceptual overlap between the D&I awareness measure used as a control variable in the clustering and the latent class capturing unawareness. We are less concerned with this issue as you find the same clustering solutions with and without the covariate and the latter served as a robustness check (and thus was not included when you crossed the clusters with the profiles). However, we ask you to report these results that include the covariate in the SOM and to refer to it in the main text.
- Attitude Measure: Thank you for providing more information about the attitude measure, which alleviated our previous concerns significantly. Judging from the new table, it is precisely the efficiency-related item that did not load cleanly with the standard attitude items and was therefore dropped. Please ensure you do not refer to this specific efficacy example item when describing the scale in the text; either refer to the table or present one of the items actually included in the final scale.
- Interrater Reliability: Thank you for providing the interrater reliability. You may describe a kappa of .89 as “excellent” if you prefer.
- Figures: For the next (and hopefully final) version, please embed SVG files directly into the document to facilitate the publication of your work. These can be exported from most programs.
- Typos: There are still a few typos, such as the extra words found in lines 133 and 165.
- Figure 3: Please indicate in the Note what the error bars represent (we assume 95% CIs). Make sure this is clear for all figures.

- Footnotes: Please move the long footnote currently on p. 10 to the SOM and refer to it briefly in the main text.
- Greek Letters: As requested previously, please do not italicize Greek letters (e.g., α).
- Scale Details: Please provide the scale endpoints and the number of response options for all scales, as these are currently missing for some.
- Table 5: Please provide one more row per group indicating the exact three-digit *p*-value and remove the asterisks.

APA References & Citations

Please run your document through our APA check application at <https://advances.pub> and correct all identified issues (note that there may be some false positives as the app is probabilistic). There are still references that are cited in the text but not listed in the reference list, or vice versa. Additionally, some citations include a comma after the first name for “et al.” citations, which should be avoided. Please also use the DOI checker to ensure all DOI numbers are correct and present.

In sum, we believe your important work is close to reaching the level to which we aspire for articles in our special issue. The remaining issues are relatively minor, and we therefore invite you to submit a revised version by **December 20**. If you require more time, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Best,

Jonas R. Kunst & John F. Dovidio

Reviewer 1

I appreciate the revisions that have been made so far, which have substantially improved the transparency and clarity of the manuscript. I especially liked the additional contextualization and rationale for examining this specific organization at this specific time. However, I retain a concern about the theoretical grounding of the manuscript, and have, upon the additional review now possible, developed an additional concern about the interpretation of the results.

On the first point, the editors previously highlighted “the need for a more thorough elaboration of divergences between behavior and attitudes... **including work in related intergroup domains**” (emphasis added). While I appreciate that the authors have made an effort to bring in theory, it’s not clear to me that the theory selected – construal theory – is the most relevant to the matter at hand. The paper still engages very minimally with any intergroup or social identity work, and this remains a real point of concern. Some places to start would be the interest convergence literature and existing work on affirmative action, but the paper ought to engage much more substantially with intergroup work, especially existing work on D&I.

Relatedly, the discussion of how the results apply to IMOC seemed largely speculative, as there were no direct measures of meaning, mastery, or belonging in the data set. This discussion can likely be replaced with work that is more directly relevant to intergroup attitudes and D&I and/or more closely connected to the data.

The other major point of concern for me is the interpretation of the “reluctants” category, who are described as “comply[ing] behaviorally despite lacking attitudinal support.” However, the attitudinal support scale focuses specifically on whether the D&I policies of the company are good/credible/useful, and the “reluctants” are most associated with the reasoning pattern of “critiquing D&I from an advocacy perspective.” Given that, it seems like the most reasonable interpretation of this profile is not that they are attitudinally opposed to D&I yet support it behaviorally, but rather that they are attitudinally and behaviorally supportive of D&I yet believe that the organization is not doing a sufficient amount of D&I work. This is a substantially different interpretation than what is advanced in the manuscript, but seems closer to the data. It would warrant a large revision of the existing manuscript, as well as a reinterpretation of the finding (discussion p31) that minoritized groups are most strongly represented among the reluctants – a fact that may in fact be well-aligned with previous work on social identities and D&I.

I also have a couple smaller concerns about the data, which a revision ought to address:

- The response rate out of the company is 25%, and of those, only 53% of survey takers provided free responses. Interpretation of those results should be contextualized within the response rate of the overall organization (e.g. p.22, line 384), and the discussion should include further reflection on the response rate and ways in which the responders differ from the organization population.
- It seems like a problem to have awareness of D&I policies as a control variable and “expressing unawareness” of D&I policies as one of the 5 main outcomes. I appreciate the additional clarification that this was an a priori hypothesis, but think it requires some additional justification, as well as interpretation relative to each other.
- Figure 2 (prev Figure 1) is now correctly labeled, but still seems like a pretty ineffective visualization. At minimum, the authors should add value labels, but I would again encourage them to re-think that visualization.

As before, I hope my comments will assist the authors as they pursue this program of research going forward.

Reviewer 2

The authors have done a very nice job addressing the earlier feedback. I found the revised manuscript much stronger and appreciated the thoughtful incorporation of the earlier feedback. The response letter also did a good job responding to each of the earlier points. I had just a few relatively minor points about the revised manuscript:

- I found the supplementary analyses separating marginalized and non-marginalized participants interesting and important. I would have liked to see this more directly incorporated into the paper along with some discussion of these findings in the discussion section, but I understand if space constraints do not allow for this. At the very least, it will be good to directly call attention to these findings at the end of the results section. For example, in the section with findings relating to managers and non-managers, an explicit reference to the supplementary materials for breakdown by identity of participants would be important.
- The introduction section on D&I being endorsed more at high levels of construals (i.e., abstractly as opposed to concretely) has been more directly examined in previous work (e.g., Mahfud et al., 2017 in JCCP; Rios & Wynn, 2016 in EJSP; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2014 in JPSP; see meta-analysis by Whitley & Webster, 2019 in PSPR).
- I wondered about the accuracy of the ambivalent profile which shows mid-level support for attitudinal and behavioral components of D&I. In the attitudes literature, ambivalence is typically characterized by high positive and high negative affect toward something, but here this is referring to mid-level support on both and may reflect mid level feelings suggesting more of a 'moderate' profile. Not sure if there is a better term to reflect this.
- Very minor point: the response letter refers to the paper in JESP!